

## 2 Corinthians 3:1-6 The All sufficiency of Christ

**Letters of Recommendation! We have all had to write them – We have all had to turn them in.**

A) College application / Job application/

B) Reference for a Baby sitter / Nanny –PP want letters of Recommendation!

C) But Have you ever considered that **your life** is a letter of recommendation ? –

1) Paul introduces that idea here in 2 Cor 3

2 Cor 3:1-3

**Do we begin again to commend ourselves? Or do we need, as some others, epistles of commendation to you or letters of commendation from you?**

**2 You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; 3 clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart.**

**Paul has been defending his calling as an apostle. His credentials, His effectiveness, his motive/ methods**

A) Now I have to admit I detect that Paul is a little tired of this whole discussion.

B) Cuts write to the Chase here - Do we need a letter of Recommendation?

1) **You are our letter of Recommendation**

**Old saying the proof is in the pudding!**

A) Paul says the **fruit from your lives** is proof enough that God is working.

B) You are letters – not written on Paper with ink but written on the **Heart by the Spirit of God!**

1) The Spirit of God working in and thru your life is the proof of Salvation – proof God is working

C) Same holds true For our lives - Living letters – that is what we are!

***You are the only Bible that someone might ever read.***

A) The best evangelism tool for promoting Christ – is the Life of a Christian – **living for Jesus**

B) I have said many times – Our strategy for evangelism as a church? Is You

1) You as individuals and families influencing your **sphere of influence** by living for Jesus.

C) Jesus said: The Christian is like a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.

1) Your light is going to shine – period –

Question is What is it going to reflect!

D) You will either be **drawing pp to** Christ or **pushing them away** from Christ by the way you live.

1) By how you conduct yourself – Business/ Work/

Relationships/ Bloggs – Opinions / hateful

**Your life is a living epistle for Jesus!**

A) That is a tall order isn't it? – Reflect Christ

**I might be the only Bible that someone reads**

B) No wonder Paul asked the question in Ch. 2:16 and **who is sufficient for these things?**

1) Answers it here

**V 4 And we have such trust through Christ toward God. 5 Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, 6 who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**

A) Come back to v.6 after my trip – but today I want to Zero in on this one statement from Paul

B) Our sufficiency is from God! Awesome wonderful life Changing truth

1) That truth is Key to the Christian life – whether you are talking about Standing strong in Victory in the battle

C) Overcoming and enduring trials

1) Or being a vessel that God can work thru

D) The Key is the All sufficiency of Christ!

**The idea has it's origins in the OT**

A) Back in the book of Genesis when Abram was 99yrs old – God appeared to Abe and said:

## **“I am God Almighty!”**

B) El Shaddai in the Hebrew } God Almighty

C) God established a Covenant with Abraham and promised that He would multiply his descendants

### **EXCEEDINGLY**

D) That Abe would become a father of many nations / that kings would descend from him

E) And that Jehovah would be God to Abe and his descendants

**And God said to Abe don't call your wife Sarai but Sarah which means Princess.**

A) Because God promised Sarah would bare a son that would be **THE HEIR**.

B) Now when Abraham heard this – he fell on his face and laughed saying: **“Shall a child be born to a woman who is 90yrs old – and I am almost 100?”**

C) And God responded to Abe – saying “Sarah shall indeed bare a son – and you shall call his name Isaac

D) **Isaac means LAUGHTER!**

**E) Call his name Laughter because – Abe thought the word of God was – incredulous**

1) He couldn't believe it! – Over the top!

**But God identified Himself to Abe as El Shaddai –  
THE ALL SUFFICIENT GOD!**

A) El = Strength in Hebrew

B) Shaddai comes from the root word shad which means breast.

1) The idea of a **woman nursing her Child** and the Child Receiving nourishment

2) **Receiving strength**

3) **Receiving life –**

C) So God portrays Himself to us as the one who nourishes us – Gives us strength – Gives us life.

**I am God almighty – or I am God the All Sufficient one!**

A) Paul being an expert in the OT Scriptures no doubt had Genesis 17 in mind as he wrote this.

B) God is able to work thru the least likely candidates

1) God is able to take the impossible and make it possible.

C) So in defending His calling as an apostle Paul wants the Corinthians to understand – **he is not sufficient in himself to fulfill that calling!**

**D) My Sufficiency is From God!**

1) Any fruit, anything of Value that had come out of Paul's life – He realized came from the Lord

E) **He is the all sufficient one** – who makes up for all of Paul's weaknesses, flaws, failures

**When you recognize your inability, your insufficiency that is a good thing –**

A) Because it has a way of forcing you to lean upon God for His strength.

B) Which is why these **hard economic times** have been good spiritually for a lot of people.

C) It has brought them to a place like never before of leaning on God – finding their sufficiency in God.

1) Daily **receiving their nourishment** from God

Strength from God –

**The Bible teaches us to look TO God for our strength!**

A) From the time that we are Children we are taught to be **self reliant – self dependent**

B) Small kids – heard the Story of the Little red train

Climb the MT by repeating I think I can .....

C) We are told **“You can accomplish anything if you believe in yourself.”**

**Songs written celebrating that theme:**

A) Seminars that teach you how to unlock the Giant within – { Find out he is a monster

B) People who think they have it all together are hard to be around.

C) **Paul wrote to the Galatians** – If a man thinks he is something when he is nothing – He is only deceiving himself

1)Not deceiving his wife / not deceiving his kids

They see the flaws

D)He is deceiving himself – Self Deceived.

**And ultimately the day will come the situation will arise where he finds – “I am not sufficient to handle this.”**

A)Life has a way doesn't it of bringing us to the realization of our weaknesses!

B)**Guys Marriage**{ Wife has a problem{ Fix it – can't

1)Just listen.

C)**Teenage drama** – girls – Wow!

D) **Temptation:** How many have fallen – and are presently being held under the power of sin / addiction / darkness

1)Because they thought – I can handle this – not a problem – I have got it together.

**Sad thing to see someone that God has delivered from an addiction – end up back in that place**

A)All because they thought – I can handle it now – no problem –

B))But when you recognize our inability and insufficiency it forces you to Look to God

1)Forces you to lean upon God

C)And in HIM you find your real source of Strength

Philippians 4:13

**“ I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”**

D)So with a fine irony Paul asserts that his confidence was **rooted in his personal inadequacy.**

1) there was no self-generated capacity in him adequate to do ministry.

E)Many pp in the Bible that God used in great ways came face to face with that reality.

**Moses{Called by God go to Pharoah – let my Pp Go!**

A)Moses argues – wrong guy God – I am not eloquent – I can't speak - slow of speech.

B)God responds **“Who has made man's mouth?”**

**Is it not I, the LORD?**

**Now go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” (Exodus 4:11)**

**This pattern (human insufficiency & divine sufficiency) became the pattern for the calls of the great Leaders of Israel.**

A) After Moses dies – Joshua – called to lead/ Joshua is afraid – he feels inadequate.

B) God's answer to Joshua's insufficiency : Josh 1:5-6

**“No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you.**

**6 Be strong and of good courage.”**

C) Gideon: Calling you to be my Leader:

**Gideon's insufficiency { I am insignificant**

**“Please, Lord, how can I save Israel? Behold, my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house,” Judges 6:15.**

D) **Gideon's insufficiency** was met with the Lord's sufficiency v. 16. **“And the LORD said to him, ‘But I will be with you, and you shall strike the Midianites as one man, ”**

**Isaiah “I am a Sinner.” Woe is me**

**“Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”**

The Lord touched Isaiah's lips with a burning coal from the altar – Said – Your iniquity is taken away

Your Sin is purged

I am sending you to be my spokesman

**Jeremiah's insufficiency { I am too young**

**“Ah, LORD GOD! Behold, I do not know how to speak, for I am only a youth,” Jeremiah 1:6**

**Jeremiah's insufficiency was met by the Lord in this way: “But the LORD said to me, ‘Do not say, “I am only a youth”; You go, and whatever I command you, speak.**

**In all these examples When God's call came, human insufficiency became the platform for God's sufficiency.**

**Moses and Jeremiah remind me of the great DL Moody: DL Moody was the Billy Graham of His day:**

A) Led to Christ by a shoe salesman – ended up preaching to millions leading 100,00s to

**Christ**

**B) But Moody had a problem – His grammar wasn't very good. - Mis pronounced words**

**1)Pp would laugh at Him – but Moody just relied on the Lord – to help it make sense**

**C)Once after one of his Messages a Seminary student walked up & said *Mr. Moody I counted 18 grammatical errors in the first 5 Min of your Mess.***

**Moody Responded – Young man I am using all the grammar I got for God's Glory what are you doing w/ Yours ?**

**The Moody's of the World inspire us – We look at God using someone like that – Makes us think – Maybe I could do that!**

**A)Some pp Presentation is so perfect – They are so polished and together!**

**B)You look and think – I could never do that!**

**1)God could never use me like that!**

**C) Often times the person who doesn't seem to have it all together has inspired the most pp to desire to go out and do the same!**

**Vance Havner is right. "Our weaknesses and God's strength form an unbeatable combination!"**

Oswald Chambers: Put it well

**"God can achieve his purpose either through the absence of human power and resources, or the abandonment of reliance on them. All through history God has chosen and used nobodies, because their unusual dependence on him made possible the unique display of his power and grace. He chose and used somebodies only when they renounced dependence on their natural abilities and resources."**

**What are you crying Lord I can't about today?**

**A)Can't love – can't forgive ? Can't go there ?**

**Can't do that !**

B) Every cry of our inability and insufficiency{

God answers – **I will be with You.**

1) I am El Shaddai – I am the all sufficient one.

C) I will be with you. **I will meet your weakness with my strength.**

1) Your inability with my power.

D) **Your inadequacy with my Wisdom:**

**You can do all things thru Christ who strengthens you.**

Without God our week would be: Sinday, Mournday, Tearsday, Wasteday, Thirstday, Frightday, and Shatterday.

Remember 7 days without God make one WEAK

**But with God} The possibilities are endless when we factor God into the equation.**

A) But in every story – Moses to Jeremiah to Moody

B) Key element in all those examples is this – the call had to be met by Faith on the part of those being called.

C) **Faith in the Sufficiency of God!** El Shaddai .....

**One last example of How God meets us in our weakness and shows His Sufficiency. 2 Kings 4**

A) Great Famine – pp are starving – Elisha meets this widow – she is in debt – she is in danger losing everything – including her sons to slavery

B) Elisha comes and asks her – do you have anything in the house? – Nothing but a Jar of oil –

**3 Elisha said, "Go, borrow empty pots s from everywhere, from all your neighbors — empty vessels; do not gather just a few."**

C) Go borrow as many as you can!

**Now God's instruction had to be met by faith.**

A) Doubt would have said to this woman – *this is stupid. Borrowing empty vessels – waste of time.*

B) She had to borrow those empty vessels believing that God was going to fill them.

1) Elisha instructed Borrow many not just a few!



C) Her faith was going to **be registered** in how many pots she borrowed.

1) The degree to which her need was met was going to be measured in the same way.

D)She borrowed a bunch- debt pd and enough to live on for the rest of the year.

1)God was sufficient to meet her need!

**The other thing I like about that story is I see a parallel in it to our lives**

A)We are those empty jars – God asks what is in your life? NOTHING – nothing but.....

B)God says let me fill you – Multiply that ability

Like the loaves and the fish.

C)Oil is symbolic of the HS –

1)Fills our lives today with a fresh touch of His spirit!

D)Filled afresh – poured out again.

**What is holding you back today from stepping out in faith ? Holding you back from Trusting God**

**In ability – I can't !**

**Fear –**

**Inadequacy – Lord I am small**

**Age – Youth**

**Sin –**